

Reporting School Fires

A step-by-step guide for teachers and school administrators

Schools are required to report all fires to the fire department in accordance with Uniform Fire Code 1302.2 adopted by WAC 212.12. Early access to fire department resources can prevent further property damage and can provide intervention for juvenile fire setters.

1. Reporting Fires

- ☐ **Early Access to Emergency Services.**
All fires must be reported immediately upon discovery. In just thirty seconds, a fire doubles in size and within minutes can threaten an entire school. Regardless of the size of the fire and the type of items burned, a fire has the potential to endanger and destroy lives and property in a matter of minutes.
- ☐ **Any Size, Anywhere.**
The size of the fire does not reflect the motive of the youth who started the fire. Every fire regardless of its location is significant. Report all fires.
- ☐ **Preserve the scene.**
Every time a fire occurs or is discovered, staff should preserve the fire scene immediately until the local fire department can respond to investigate the incident.
- ☐ **Report findings.**
Prompt and complete reporting helps identify youth that use fire in an inappropriate and unsafe way. Then the youth can receive intervention needed to prevent loss of life and property due to fire. Early notification is critical; youths involved with fire once are five times more likely to use fire inappropriately again unless there is professional intervention.

2. Understanding Youth that Set Fires

- ☐ **Risk Factors**
Juveniles start fires for many reasons. No matter what the reason, intervention is needed to correct the behavior. Some risk factors are: being influenced by peers, showing off for peers, not being aware of the potential legal consequences of their actions, acting impulsively, lacking the ability to concentrate, refusing to cooperate, having a history of abuse, having recently experienced a crisis, having behavior or academic problems, and/or acting out their feelings.

3. Intervention

- ☐ **A Criminal Act.**
Youth who use fire at school or on school grounds threaten the safety of other students and all school staff. They need to be held accountable for their actions. Starting a fire on school property is a criminal act. Regardless of whether charges are filed, all fires need to be taken seriously.
- ☐ **Intervention May Include:**
Addressing fire curiosity through education; a screening interview to determine appropriate intervention; making referrals to mental health providers when more extensive evaluation is needed; partnering with law enforcement and juvenile departments; and requiring the youth to participate in restitution programs and complete community service projects.

For more information contact your local fire department or the State Fire Marshal's Office at (360) 753-0435.